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TSF141841



**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

**9 October 1958**

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Guided Missile Intelligence  
Committee**

**SUBJECT: Soviet ICBM Development Program**

1. We have estimated, for a variety of cogent reasons, that the Soviets have assigned a very high priority to their ICBM development program, and that they have already decided to acquire a sizeable operational capability with ICBMs at the earliest practicable date. In the light of much evidence of high Soviet capabilities in ballistic missiles, of the establishment of a new test range for ICBM and related purposes, and of the early achievement of initial ICBM and earth satellite vehicle launchings, we have also estimated that the USSR will probably achieve an initial ICBM operational capability some time during calendar 1959. We have not ruled out the possibility that the Soviets may establish in the latter part of 1958 a limited operational capability with comparatively unproven ICBMs.

2. These estimates of the probable and possible date of initial Soviet operational capability with ICBMs were predicated upon the fairly frequent test firing of ICBMs over a period of months. But following the first few ICBMs and earth satellite launchings, the test-firing program apparently proceeded at a slower pace than we had anticipated. More recently, to the best of our knowledge there has been no successful firing of an ICBM test vehicle since late May 1958, a period of more than five months.

3. In view of the importance of this question to US national security, and of the imminence of a new national estimate on Soviet capabilities and intentions in the military and other fields (NIE 11-4-58),

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it would be appropriate for GMIC at an early date to reexamine the Soviet ICBM development program and to reaffirm or recommend modification of our existing estimate. In this re-examination, the following questions should be considered:

- a. Is our intelligence coverage sufficient to establish with a high degree of confidence the number of Soviet ICBM and earth satellite firings, including the number of failures?
- b. What is the degree of likelihood that through deception or concealment the Soviets have prevented us from discovering the true magnitude of their ICBM test-firing program? What would be the more likely Soviet methods of accomplishing such deception or concealment, if any?
- c. What progress toward development of an operational weapon system are the Soviets likely to have made to date from test firings and attempted firings at Tyura Tam?
- d. What additional progress is likely to have been made through component testing at Kapustin Yar prior to the initial test-flights at Tyura Tam? Are components likely to have been tested subsequently at Kapustin Yar? With what probable effect on the ICBM program?
- e. Is it likely that static testing of ICBMs has taken place unknown to us? With what probable effect on the ICBM program?
- f. What is the likelihood that the apparent slow rate of ICBM test firing represents serious difficulty and delay in the development program?
- g. What is the likelihood that the program has already been successful enough to permit the USSR to establish an initial operational capability? Under such conditions, what sort of characteristics might an operational ICBM have at present?

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h. Is there any evidence to support the present existence or preparation of an operational ICBM capability in the USSR? Of a production program for ICBMs and systems equipment? Would such evidence be expected, in the light of our current collection capabilities?

i. What activity (e.g. missile production, launching and handling facility construction, troop training) should be under way at present, and at what rates should such activity proceed, if the USSR is to acquire an operational capability with 500 ICBMs in 1961 or at the latest 1962?

j. What is the likelihood that the USSR is emphasizing space flight programs at the expense of ICBM development?

k. What other factors (e.g. a deliberate Soviet policy of obtaining maximum benefit from each test firing before the next is attempted) may explain the apparent slow rate of ICBM test firings to date?

l. In sum, what is the most likely explanation for the observed pattern of Soviet ICBM development to date, and what modification, if any, should be made to our existing estimate?

4. CSIC should complete this reexamination and submit its recommendations to me and to the Board of National Estimates by 31 October 1958.

ALLEN W. DOWNS  
Director

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OCT 10 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, U. S. INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Soviet ICBM Development Program

This will confirm Defense concurrence in the subject draft paper. Verbal concurrence has already been given by telephone to Mr. John Heires.

It is felt that such a review of the Soviet ICBM Development Program is of the utmost importance particularly in view of the apparent anomalies in the Soviet testing program.

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